

.....
(Original Signature of Member)

118TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To support the establishment or expansion and operation of programs using a network of public and private community entities to provide mentoring for children and youth with experience in foster care.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Ms. SCANLON introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on _____

A BILL

To support the establishment or expansion and operation of programs using a network of public and private community entities to provide mentoring for children and youth with experience in foster care.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Foster Youth Men-
5 toring Act of 2023”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

1 (1) Positive relationships are important for chil-
2 dren and youth. An estimated 20 percent of youth
3 do not have caring adults in their lives—rep-
4 resenting 8,500,000 youth. Children who have a
5 positive caring relationship with an adult can also
6 benefit from additional positive relationships.

7 (2) Research shows that mentors make a dif-
8 ference in young people’s lives. At-risk youth who
9 have mentors are 55 percent more likely to enroll in
10 college. Students who meet regularly with their men-
11 tors are 52 percent less likely than their peers to
12 skip a day of school. Youth who have mentors are
13 also 130 percent more likely to hold a leadership po-
14 sition.

15 (3) Young people that have mentors have im-
16 proved relationships with adults, fewer disciplinary
17 referrals, and more confidence to achieve their goals.

18 (4) In 2017, 442,995 youth were in foster care.
19 Of those youth 70,858 were between the ages of 10
20 and 13, and 101,983 were between the ages of 14
21 and 20.

22 (5) Mentoring programs that serve foster youth
23 are unique and require additional considerations, in-
24 cluding specialized training and support necessary to

1 provide for consistent, long-term relationships for
2 children in foster care.

3 (6) Mentoring programs can be used as an ef-
4 fective preventative or intervention strategy to sup-
5 port positive outcomes for foster youth.

6 (7) Mentoring programs targeting at-risk
7 youth, community-based programs, and programs
8 lasting 1 year or more are more frequently found to
9 be effective.

10 (8) Increasing evidence is showing that peer
11 mentoring and support can be very effective in en-
12 gaging young people. Alumni of and youth in foster
13 care have noted the importance of the support and
14 service delivery by individuals with lived experience,
15 including peers.

16 **SEC. 3. PROGRAMS FOR MENTORING CHILDREN IN FOSTER**
17 **CARE.**

18 Subpart 2 of part B of title IV of the Social Security
19 Act (42 U.S.C. 629 et seq.) is amended by adding at the
20 end the following:

21 **“SEC. 439A. PROGRAMS FOR MENTORING CHILDREN IN**
22 **FOSTER CARE AND YOUTH WITH EXPERI-**
23 **ENCE IN FOSTER CARE.**

24 “(a) PURPOSE.—It is the purpose of this section to
25 authorize the Secretary to make grants to eligible appli-

1 cants to support the establishment or expansion and oper-
2 ation of programs using a network of public and private
3 community entities to provide mentoring for children in
4 foster care and children with experience in foster care.

5 “(b) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

6 “(1) CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE.—The term
7 ‘children in foster care’ means children who have
8 been removed from the custody of their biological or
9 adoptive parents by a State or tribal child welfare
10 agency.

11 “(2) CHILDREN WITH EXPERIENCE IN FOSTER
12 CARE.—The term ‘children with experience in foster
13 care’ means children, youth, and adults who have
14 not attained 26 years of age and who, at any time,
15 were removed from the custody of their biological or
16 adoptive parents by a State or tribal child welfare
17 agency.

18 “(3) MENTORING.—The term ‘mentoring’
19 means a structured, managed program—

20 “(A) in which children and youth are ap-
21 propriately matched with screened and trained
22 adult or peer volunteers for consistent relation-
23 ships;

1 “(B) that can include direct one-on-one,
2 group, or peer mentoring services that focus on
3 1 or more of—

4 “(i) academic support;

5 “(ii) enrichment;

6 “(iii) educational success;

7 “(iv) minimizing risk behaviors; or

8 “(v) promoting social skills and
9 healthy relationships;

10 “(C) that involves meetings, events, and
11 activities on a regular basis designed to last at
12 least 1 year; and

13 “(D) that is intended to meet, in part, the
14 social and emotional development of the child or
15 youth, the need of the child or youth for in-
16 volvement with a caring and supportive adult,
17 and the need of the child or youth for positive
18 role models, connections, and normalcy.

19 “(4) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible en-
20 tity’ means—

21 “(A) a nonprofit organization;

22 “(B) a State child welfare agency;

23 “(C) a local educational agency;

24 “(D) an Indian tribe or a tribal organiza-
25 tion; or

1 “(E) a faith-based organization.

2 “(c) GRANT PROGRAM.—

3 “(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall carry
4 out a program to award grants to eligible entities to
5 support the establishment or expansion and oper-
6 ation of programs using networks of public and pri-
7 vate community entities to provide mentoring for
8 children in foster care and children with experience
9 in foster care.

10 “(2) APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS.—To be eli-
11 gible for a grant under paragraph (1), an eligible en-
12 tity shall submit to the Secretary an application con-
13 taining the following:

14 “(A) PROGRAM DESIGN.—A description of
15 the proposed program to be carried out using
16 amounts provided under this grant, including—

17 “(i) targeted outcomes, mentee age
18 and eligibility, mentor type, setting, dura-
19 tion, and meeting frequency;

20 “(ii) the number of mentor-child
21 matches proposed to be established and
22 maintained annually under the program;

23 “(iii) the capacity and expertise of the
24 program to serve children and youth in a
25 way that is responsive to children and

1 youth of color, expectant and parenting
2 youth, indigenous youth, youth who are
3 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, or
4 queer, and youth with disabilities;

5 “(iv) actions taken to ensure that the
6 design of the program reflects input from
7 young people, including children with expe-
8 rience in foster care; and

9 “(v) such other information as the
10 Secretary may require.

11 “(B) RECRUITMENT.—An assurance that
12 the program will engage in recruitment strate-
13 gies for mentors that—

14 “(i) realistically portray the benefits,
15 practices, supports, and challenges of par-
16 ticipating in the program; and

17 “(ii) seek to recruit mentors who re-
18 flect the race, ethnicity, and various identi-
19 ties of children in foster care and children
20 with experience in foster care.

21 “(C) TRAINING.—An assurance that all
22 mentors covered under the program will receive
23 intensive and ongoing training in the following
24 areas:

1 “(i) Child and adolescent develop-
2 ment, including the importance of bonding.

3 “(ii) Family dynamics, including the
4 effects of domestic violence and trauma.

5 “(iii) Understanding the education
6 rights of foster children and youth, includ-
7 ing those related to post-secondary edu-
8 cation.

9 “(iv) The challenges of and ap-
10 proaches to support the transition to adult-
11 hood.

12 “(v) Cultural competence practices
13 and relationship-building strategies.

14 “(vi) Positive youth development and
15 authentic engagement practices.

16 “(vii) Recognizing and reporting child
17 abuse and neglect.

18 “(viii) Confidentiality requirements
19 for working with children in foster care.

20 “(ix) Working in coordination with
21 the child welfare system.

22 “(x) Understanding foster the edu-
23 cational rights of children and youth, in-
24 cluding those related to post-secondary
25 education.

1 “(xi) Other matters related to work-
2 ing with children in foster care and chil-
3 dren with experience in foster care.

4 “(D) SCREENING.—An assurance that all
5 mentors covered under the program are appro-
6 priately screened and have demonstrated a will-
7 ingness to comply with all aspects of the men-
8 toring program, including—

9 “(i) a written screening plan that in-
10 cludes all of the policies and procedures
11 used to screen and select mentors, includ-
12 ing eligibility requirements and preferences
13 for such applicants;

14 “(ii) a description of the methods to
15 be used to conduct criminal background
16 checks on all prospective mentors, and the
17 methods in place to exclude mentors with
18 convictions for crimes against children and
19 mentors with convictions occurring within
20 the past 10 years that are directly related
21 to child safety; and

22 “(iii) a description of the methods to
23 be used to ensure that the mentors are
24 willing and able to serve as a mentor on a

1 long-term, consistent basis as defined in
2 the application.

3 “(E) COMMUNITY CONSULTATION AND EN-
4 GAGEMENT; COORDINATION WITH OTHER PRO-
5 GRAMS.—A demonstration that, in developing
6 and implementing the program, the eligible en-
7 tity will—

8 “(i) consult with and actively en-
9 gage—

10 “(I) children in foster care and
11 children with experience in foster
12 care;

13 “(II) public and private commu-
14 nity entities, including religious orga-
15 nizations and Indian tribal organiza-
16 tions and urban Indian organizations;
17 and

18 “(III) family members of children
19 and youth who may be potential cli-
20 ents of the program;

21 “(ii) coordinate the mentoring pro-
22 gram and the activities of the eligible enti-
23 ty with other Federal, State, and local pro-
24 grams serving children and youth; and

1 “(iii) consult and coordinate with ap-
2 propriate Federal, State, and local correc-
3 tions, workforce development, education,
4 and substance abuse and mental health
5 agencies.

6 “(F) EQUAL ACCESS FOR LOCAL SERVICE
7 PROVIDERS.—An assurance that public and pri-
8 vate entities and nonprofit community organiza-
9 tions, including religious organizations and In-
10 dian organizations, will be eligible to participate
11 on an equal basis.

12 “(G) RECORDS, REPORTS, AND AUDITS.—
13 An agreement that the eligible entity will main-
14 tain such records, make such reports, and co-
15 operate with such reviews or audits as the Sec-
16 retary may find necessary for purposes of over-
17 sight of project activities and expenditures.

18 “(H) EVALUATION.—An agreement that
19 the eligible entity will cooperate fully with the
20 ongoing and final evaluation of the program
21 under the plan by the Secretary, by means in-
22 cluding providing the Secretary access to the
23 program, the staff of the program, program-re-
24 lated records and documents, and each public

1 or private community entity receiving funding
2 under the plan.

3 “(3) CONSIDERATIONS IN AWARDING
4 GRANTS.—In awarding grants under this subsection,
5 the Secretary shall take into consideration—

6 “(A) how, and the degree to which, chil-
7 dren in foster care and children with experience
8 in foster care are consulted and engaged in the
9 development, design, and implementation of the
10 program;

11 “(B) the feasibility and strength of a plan
12 to recruit and support transition-aged foster
13 youth;

14 “(C) the overall qualifications and capacity
15 of the eligible entity and its partners to effec-
16 tively carry out a mentoring program under this
17 subsection;

18 “(D) the level and quality of training pro-
19 vided to mentors under the program;

20 “(E) evidence of coordination of the pro-
21 gram with the social services and education pro-
22 grams of the State or political subdivision;

23 “(F) the ability of the eligible entity to
24 provide supervision and support for mentors

1 under the program and the youth served by
2 such mentors;

3 “(G) the number of children and youth in
4 foster care served by the State or political sub-
5 division; and

6 “(H) any other factors that the Secretary
7 determines to be significant with respect to the
8 need for, or the potential success of, carrying
9 out a mentoring program under this section.

10 “(4) USE OF FUNDS.—An eligible entity that
11 receives a grant under this subsection may use such
12 funds to—

13 “(A) develop and carry out a training pro-
14 gram and ongoing support for mentors;

15 “(B) recruit mentors for children and
16 youth in foster care;

17 “(C) compensate mentors including peer
18 mentors;

19 “(D) pay for costs related to mentee par-
20 ticipation in the program; and

21 “(E) provide activities that will help the
22 development of a child in foster care who is
23 participating in the program.

24 “(5) GRANT AMOUNT.—In awarding grants
25 under this subsection, the Secretary shall scale

1 grants to account for the annual budget and capac-
2 ity of the eligible entity.

3 “(6) ANNUAL REPORT.—Not later than 1 year
4 after the date of enactment of this section, and an-
5 nually thereafter, the Secretary shall prepare and
6 submit to Congress a report that includes the fol-
7 lowing with respect to the year involved:

8 “(A) A description of the number of pro-
9 grams receiving grant awards under this sub-
10 section.

11 “(B) A description of mentors who partici-
12 pate in programs described in subparagraph
13 (A), including the overall number, average
14 length of participation, and demographics.

15 “(C) A description of—

16 “(i) the number of children in foster
17 care who participated in mentoring pro-
18 grams funded by the grant funds under
19 this subsection;

20 “(ii) data on the academic achieve-
21 ment of the children in mentoring pro-
22 grams funded by the grant funds under
23 this subsection; and

24 “(iii) the number of children in foster
25 care on waiting lists for such mentoring

1 programs, including successful transition
2 into post-secondary education where appli-
3 cable.

4 “(D) Any other information that the Sec-
5 retary determines to be relevant to the evalua-
6 tion of the program under this section.

7 “(7) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—
8 There are authorized to be appropriated to carry out
9 this section—

10 “(A) \$50,000,000 for each of fiscal years
11 2024 and 2025; and

12 “(B) such sums as may be necessary for
13 each succeeding fiscal year.”.